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Contact: Gary Kamimura (360) 438-3152  
Michael Wilson (360) 902-9317

### State's Average Annual Pay Rises Slightly to \$37,229

The average annual wage in Washington state grew a slight 0.9 percent last year to \$37,229, according to information released today by the Washington Employment Security Department. That was the smallest increase since 1993.

“Wage growth was essentially flat during 2001, and that doesn’t come as a big surprise given the national economic recession and weak demand for workers here,” said Employment Security Commissioner Sylvia P. Mundy. “At the same time, it was quite a departure from the much stronger rates of wage growth we saw in the latter half of the 1990s.”

From 1994-2000, average wage growth ranged from a high of 8.4 percent in 1999 to 2.2 percent in 1994. The data released today does not include federal civilian employees in the state.

Average employment in firms covered by the state’s unemployment insurance system fell by 0.2 percent from 2000 to 2001, reflecting the effects of the recession. This was the first time since

1984 that employment growth in these firms, which currently make up about 85 percent of all employment in the state, was negative.

“The sharp deceleration in the rates of growth in covered employment and wages in 2001 confirm how hard the national economic recession and distinct structural declines hit Washington,” said Gary Kamimura, a senior economist for the department. “The new data reinforces the observations made during the course of 2001 that clearly indicated progressive weakness in the state’s labor market. The high tech collapse, in particular, was a prominent factor as income from high paying jobs and accompanying stock options evaporated.”

On a weekly basis, the average wage in Washington state was \$715 in 2001. In the past, the rise in the average would have resulted in an automatic increase in the maximum weekly unemployment insurance benefit to unemployed workers. Because of a cap placed on maximum benefits in recent legislation, however, only the minimum weekly benefit amount will increase. The minimum will rise by one dollar to \$107. Maximum weekly unemployment benefits will remain at \$496.

**Annual Pay in Washington State  
1987-2001\***

